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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 5 December 1994, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. ALSTON

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION: "HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS" (agenda item 5) (E/C.12/1994/WP.23)

1. Mr. AYALA LASSO (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) stressed the critical importance of human rights education. He was particularly pleased by the cooperative spirit displayed, which would be vital to any truly global effort to advance the cause of human rights education. The timing of the discussion was appropriate, since it came only a few days before a United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education was due to be proclaimed by the General Assembly.

2. The proclamation of the Decade would not represent the birth of global efforts for human rights education, but rather their maturation. In conformity with the provisions of Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, United Nations activities in the field of human rights had for almost 50 years been devoted to promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. Those activities had taken many forms, from standard-setting to monitoring and from facilitating international dialogue and cooperation to the provision of technical assistance. The collective result had been the production of what the Secretary-General had called a "common language of humanity", which had been richly endowed by the United Nations with universal standards, international mechanisms and a solid ethical and legal framework for the rights and responsibilities of States and peoples in their daily contact.

3. However, the effective promotion and protection of human rights demanded far more than a well developed set of rules and the establishment of mechanisms to ensure that they were complied with. A meaningful struggle for human rights also required that those who had the potential to realize them should be aware of both their rights and their responsibilities within that international framework. To that effect the United Nations had also given increasing attention to human rights education in its global activities. The objective of all human rights education must be to teach the "common language of humanity" to all persons everywhere, to make each person fluent in its vocabulary, and to enable each person to translate its terms into his or her daily conduct.

4. Education went to the very heart of the human experience, transmitting, preserving and enriching cultural, religious and intellectual traditions and forming the tools by which mankind could improve the quality of life for all. Humans rights must be a central concern of education, just as respect for human rights was at the centre of a meaningful human life. Human rights should not be one subject of education among others but should permeate all aspects of education at all levels and in all forms.

5. The General Assembly had entrusted him, as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, with the challenging task of coordinating United Nations education and information programmes in the field of human rights, a responsibility to which he intended to give high priority.

6. Education was of crucial importance for the promotion and protection of all human rights. The right to education was a basic human right, but more important in the present connection was the internationally recognized human rights content of education. Under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, education should be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity and should strengthen respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education should enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women provided even more detailed provisions along the same lines. State obligations to guarantee education and to ensure its human rights content were monitored by committees of independent experts, the Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights being foremost among them. Ways of focusing human rights education activities around the international norms he had outlined and the committees charged with their application should therefore be explored. Those committees could consider strengthening their monitoring of the human rights education obligations of States parties through a revision of the information they requested in the reports which States parties submitted to them and through the preparation of a general comment on the issue. It was therefore most encouraging that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would now discuss, with all those concerned, how to improve and strengthen human rights education.

7. One of the most important recommendations of the World Conference on Human Rights had been the proclamation of a United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. The General Assembly had agreed to that recommendation and had requested that a plan of action for the Decade should be prepared. Activities in promoting human rights education must be based on the experience of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and must be carried out in a coordinated manner with all the international agencies and bodies active in the field. Development agencies and international financial institutions must also be brought into the picture, given the importance of respect for human rights for successful economic and social development. Governments, international human rights committees, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, grassroots organizations and professional associations must seek practical ways of working together.

8. He had been giving his personal attention to the preparation of a viable and practical plan of action for the Decade. Human rights education was essential for the encouragement of stable and harmonious intercommunity relations, for mutual tolerance and understanding, and finally for peace. All individuals, groups and peoples should be informed of the rights to which they could aspire and of the machinery which existed to protect those rights. A comprehensive approach to human rights education and training should give special attention to those groups that were in a position to exercise an influence on the human rights of others through the education and training of specialists - to "the training of trainers". In that connection the target groups could include school teachers, magistrates, senior officials, and members of the police and the armed forces. Broad-based consultations concerning the contents of the plan of action for the Decade for Human Rights

Education had been continuing with Governments, specialized agencies, regional organizations, treaty monitoring bodies and NGOs, and a comprehensive plan of action was now being discussed by the General Assembly. The conclusions reached in the present deliberations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights would receive his full attention.

9. The CHAIRPERSON observed that it was extremely important for the Committee to recognize that human rights education was a particularly difficult subject. It was easy to call on all concerned, especially school teachers, to do something about it, and no Government was opposed to it in principle, but very little progress had been made over the past 50 years. The question now was to determine what could be done to give substance to the principle of human rights education. The starting point was article 13 of the Covenant, which entailed that people should have the right to education, without which human rights education would be meaningless, that human rights education should be directed towards respect for human rights, and that education should be given in economic, social and cultural rights, to which only a very small proportion of current human rights activities were devoted despite the importance of the rights to food, work, health care and education.

10. Human rights should not be conceived as a subject only for captive audiences of school children and students. Over the past 20 years they had been transformed from an issue of basic ethics into a relatively complex domain whose concepts and implications were not easy to grasp. Even well-informed people needed to be educated in them, since some persons engaged in promoting human rights knew little or nothing about the technicalities of human rights law. That observation might even apply to the Centre for Human Rights itself, where staff members were well informed with regard to the narrow areas in which they worked but were given no broader training.

11. Mrs. BONOAN-DANDAN, Co-ordinator of the Day of general discussion on human rights education and public information activities relating to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, read out document E/C.12/1994/WP.23, providing a broad outline of the background to the situation, and thanked all those present for their participation in the Committee's proceedings.

12. Mr. BASTA (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that while society expected children to grow up as responsible citizens, children around the world were being denied the most essential of their rights, and that the number of children suffering the consequences of broken marriages, alcoholism, neglect and abuse was increasing. Moreover, their education both at home and school did not respect their own cultural identity and did not encourage them to respect other cultures. Rights violations were not only the cause of personal suffering but also sowed the seeds for political and social unrest. For the sake for both individual and global development, children needed to understand the concept of rights, to know what rights they were entitled to, to empathize with those whose rights had been denied and to be empowered to protect their own rights and those of others, for the simple reason that they would become adults who would transmit those beliefs, positive or negative, to others.

13. UNICEF's legal mandate in that field obviously drew heavily on the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; in that regard, the question also arose as to who was to be considered more important for sovereignty: a State, a society, or a well-balanced, healthy child.

14. UNICEF was also increasingly linking its work for children's rights with the promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and emphasizing the ethical and strategic value of focusing on the girl-child. Issues which deserved increased attention included not only the need to improve access by girls to education, but also the quality and openness of the education given to girls. UNICEF was also very concerned about the obligation in some societies, of marriage at a very young age and would like to increase its advocacy to protect the physical integrity of girl children from harmful sexual and surgical practices.

15. International human rights instruments must be widely known and understood by all segments of society, from the grassroots to the executive. UNICEF, with the Centre for Human Rights and its NGO partners, had developed kits, brochures and other information material. In industrialized countries the 38 National Committees for UNICEF supported human rights education through Education for Development activities. UNICEF did not work only on educational curricula, but was also beginning to advocate the use of billboards, television advertisements and radio messages on human rights and children's rights, as it did for some epidemics in certain countries. He believed that UNICEF should add to billboards on family planning AIDS messages that related to children's rights and human rights and that more should be done to involve the media in promoting human rights.

16. Expertise was also needed to analyse with children the cultural and historical reasons for antagonisms and development education work should take into account the reasons that led to stereotypes of intolerance. However, the first right, that of education had to come first. Education must be protected, expanded and its quality improved, as the basis for future work in development education.

17. Turning to recent initiatives he said that UNICEF had begun to focus on the Mediterranean as a locus for much of the worst ethnic misunderstanding, hatred and intolerance in that region, and had begun a series of seminars that traced the origins of the conflicts and misconceptions, as well as the bonds between the various countries of the Mediterranean and which were proving extremely popular in the context of development education and children's rights education.

18. Mr. GARVALOV (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)), asked if it was not high time for States to stop making excuses as to why they were still lagging behind in providing free and unimpeded access by all to human rights and fundamental freedoms. That was possible only if people became aware of their human rights. Article 7 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination obliged States parties to undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the field of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which led to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or

ethnic groups. Few States parties had complied with that article; the majority had taken only some measures, which had been neither immediate nor very effective. CERD was justifiably concerned that there was no full compliance with the Convention. Treaty bodies should continue to press States parties to include human rights topics in their national education programmes. Had Human Rights Day been turned into an annual event to extol the virtues of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to pay lip service to human rights? Other than through education, how could the individual at large overcome bias, prejudice, century-old enmities, pent-up emotions and frustration, distorted perceptions of human values? There were many cases where such ill feelings were rampant because the remedies of education had not been property applied.

19. Another serious problem was the growing tendency in recent years to lend different, perhaps justifiable, interpretations to already internationally recognized human rights standards because they meant different things to different societies and cultures. Treaty bodies should more thoroughly examine the obligation of States parties to provide education for all. While all State education systems faced the dilemma that providing separate education for the majority and for the minority would sometimes threaten the unity of the State, if national interests conflicted with the obligations of a State party under international human rights treaties, did the concern for State unity override those obligations? Another serious problem was how to preserve the identity of persons belonging to national, or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. International law recognized that education as a human right was a crucial part of minority rights, but a State party was fully within its right to query whether minority groups should have special education rights. CERD had heard States parties claim the futility of "special education rights for minority groups". Obviously there was a conflict between human rights as seen by a State party, and the human right to education of persons belonging to minorities. He wondered whether the right to education, seen through the prism of such considerations, could be said to be the concern of the State alone. There were undoubtedly broader considerations, regional in scope and substance, where international cooperation was most needed. Perhaps the problem merited special consideration by all treaty bodies.

20. Mr. NETTER (Department of Public Information (DPI)) said that the Department coordinated and initiated projects and activities for the World Public Information Campaign for Human Rights. By employing a multimedia approach, it facilitated the effective coverage of United Nations human rights activities and ensured the worldwide distribution of relevant information materials. Its 1994-1995 programme budget included a number of promotional activities under the thematic heading of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. Under separate areas of the budget, DPI was also carrying out sizeable information programmes on economic and social issues in support of the major conferences in 1995, all of which would address issues closely related to human rights. Activities included the production of press kits and other print information material; briefings and seminars for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media, academics and others; and production of radio and television documentaries and special activities undertaken at the national and regional levels by the United Nations Information Centres and Services. The Department elaborated information

strategies on priority human rights and economic and social development issues which continually reinforced the relationship between those issues and human rights. Other pertinent activities included undertaking press coverage of all intergovernmental meetings on human rights; holding press conferences and briefings; initiating contacts with the media; answering public inquiries; organizing special events and other activities; and coordinating inter-agency promotional activities. To launch the Decade for Human Rights Education, DPI and the Centre for Human Rights were co-sponsoring a programme at United Nations Headquarters on 9 December, Human Rights Day. Also during 1994, DPI had reprinted and distributed worldwide, in the six official languages, the Declaration on the Right to Development, the International Bill of Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Outreach and liaison with the media, NGOs and the public had focused on the indivisibility of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights.

21. Many of the Department's activities could be considered "educational" in the broad sense of the term, and a significant number of its existing programmes and activities were used or adapted for educational purposes. The Department was, for example, producing a wall chart describing the United Nations human rights mechanisms, which would be useful as a visual aid for teaching. In addition, the Department's information officers and Centre directors gave regular briefings on human rights issues for secondary and college students as well as for NGOs. DPI had also produced a series of educational videos and study guides, including one entitled "Teaching about human rights".

22. The CHAIRPERSON said that Mr. Netter's statement notwithstanding, he remained to be convinced that DPI had done very much which specifically focused on economic, social and cultural rights, which it dealt with at best incidentally, in a much broader context. The Department should consider producing materials focused quite specifically on those rights.

23. Mr. ALVAREZ VITA said that both the right to education and human rights posed certain problems of an ongoing nature, including certain aspects of the nature of human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as various schools of thought agreed that the basis for human rights was the dignity of the human being. Accordingly, the only conclusion possible within the context of access to education was that all human beings had the same right. The indivisibility and interdependence of human rights was particularly clear with regard to the right to education. It was impossible not to mention as well the way in which the rights to health, food and housing were interwoven with the right to education. Another basic aspect of the right to education was the legal and normative nature of human rights, on both the international and domestic levels. The lack of progress in international as well as domestic law, and the failure of that law to overcome polemics on whether international law held precedence over domestic law, had a negative impact on many human rights, including the right to education. The concept of "live and let live" was very clear within the context of the right to education, as concerned both States and individuals. That in turn raised the problem of freedom of education at both the State and private levels, as well as the participation of NGOs.

24. He was pleased that the International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education (OIDEL) had submitted a working paper (E/C.12/1994/WP.15) drawing attention to the growth of intolerance, xenophobia and racism. Intolerance was not confined to any particular culture. The subject was a very broad one. Suffice to say that the worst form of intolerance was the claim of infallibility. The evils of xenophobia and racism, which often went hand in hand, could to a large extent be overcome through human rights education.

25. One area that the OIDEL might also address is the secular problem of discrimination. That concerned not only racial discrimination, but also discrimination against women, children, minorities, indigenous peoples, the poor, migrants, refugees, the internally displaced and foreigners without proper documents, all persons for whom it was sometimes argued that they should not fully enjoy economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to education. It was particularly serious when a Government, in taking a decision that violated human rights, sought to justify its action by such means as a referendum. Respect for human rights could not be put to a vote.

26. AIDS and the fight against that scourge were closely related to the right to education. For social, cultural or political reasons, AIDS prevention and information campaigns were often not included in the curricula of schools or in extra-curricula activities. Persons infected with AIDS were sometimes refused access to, or expelled from, education centres. In that connection, it was important to stress the need for mandatory courses to fight drug consumption.

27. He also welcomed the working paper submitted by the American Association of Jurists (E/C.12/1994/WP.22). The Committee must remain alive to the impact that adjustment policies had on human rights in general and the right to education in particular. One State party to the Covenant had even enacted a new Constitution which contained provisions that amounted to a retreat on human rights protection. Free education had been restricted, in direct violation of the obligations under the Covenant. The Committee must follow such developments closely; monitoring mechanisms must be created to prevent violations of the Covenant.

28. The American Association of Jurists proposed that economic, social and cultural rights should be incorporated in the technical assistance and advisory services activities of the Centre for Human Rights and that the NGOs should be included as beneficiaries of such services, an initiative which should be given close consideration by the Committee, not only within the framework of the specific right to education, but also within the whole range of rights guaranteed by the Covenant.

29. Mr. SYMONIDES (United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that it was only natural for UNESCO to fulfil a special role in the area of education for human rights. UNESCO's ultimate goal was to create a complete system of human rights teaching and education for all citizens and populations, extending from primary and secondary schools to university and out-of-school education.

30. Looking at some of UNESCO's activities and programmes over the past two years, he referred first to the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, held in Montreal, Canada. The Congress had adopted the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy. UNESCO was encouraged that the World Conference on Human Rights had recommended that States should take into account the Montreal Plan of Action when developing specific programmes and strategies for ensuring the widest human rights education. Fulfilling the obligations stemming from the World Plan of Action, the UNESCO Executive Board had adopted the Statute of the Advisory Committee on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, which would follow up the implementation of the Montreal World Plan of Action.

31. The approved programme for 1994-1995 foresaw a number of activities aimed at promoting human rights education. Thus, each year, directors of human rights institutes discussed at annual meetings organized by UNESCO questions linked to the development of education for human rights and democracy. The next annual meeting would take place on 7 and 8 December in Strasbourg.

32. An important role was played by a network of UNESCO Chairs on Human Rights, whose purpose was to promote an integrated system of research, training and information activities in the field of education for human rights and foster national, subregional and regional collaboration between researchers and teachers. Such Chairs currently existed in Argentina, Belarus, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ethiopia, Jordan, Namibia, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Spain and Venezuela. Many universities and countries had expressed an interest in creating Chairs, including Benin, Brazil, Mexico, Philippines and the Republic of Korea.

33. In 1995, The Associate Schools Project (ASP) would grow to include some 125 countries and 3,100 institutions. The ASP was currently seeking new priorities and policy orientations for education and training in order to enhance its effectiveness in addressing the challenges of peace, human rights and democracy today.

34. The success of the ASP had prompted the idea to create an Associated Universities Project in order to establish close ties and cooperation among universities and high education institutions to focus on education for peace, human rights and democracy.

35. Over the past two years, more than 25 works on human rights and democracy had been published by UNESCO, many of them in several languages.

36. UNESCO was encouraging human rights by regularly recognizing special achievements in that field. In the current year, following the recommendation of its international jury, the UNESCO Prize for the Teaching of Human Rights had been awarded to the Philippine Commission on Human Rights and to Dr. José Zalaquett Daher (Chile), and Honorary Mention had gone to the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg and to Manfred Nowak (Austria).

37. The UNESCO Manual for Human Rights Education at University Level, currently under preparation, was designed to impart fresh impetus to human rights education.

38. The widely read UNESCO Courier, which appeared in 32 languages, had recently addressed such important questions as minorities, human rights and the challenge of democracy.

39. As the coordinating agency for the United Nations Year for Tolerance, UNESCO had presented a plan of action to the General Assembly containing an important human rights education component.

40. UNESCO also maintained a regular dialogue with the ministers of education of the member States and benefited from their direct support and involvement. The International Conference on Education, in October 1994, had adopted a declaration and taken note of the integrated framework of education for peace, human rights and democracy, as specially relevant for education at the primary and secondary levels.

41. One feature of UNESCO's work in the field of education for human rights was a reporting system linked with a unique normative instrument, the Recommendation Concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1974). Another initiative, UNESCO's Participation Programme, currently in full expansion, had proved to be a valuable tool for providing financial, technical and expert assistance to member States and had a growing number of activities on education for human rights.

42. Another feature of UNESCO's institutionalized collaboration with NGOs was the UNESCO-NGO Standing Committee on Education for Human Rights, Tolerance, Democracy and Peace, which made it possible for more than 60 NGOs to engage in concerted action for human rights education, both formal and non-formal.

43. In order to ensure better cooperation within the Organization, the Director-General had decided to create a Special Intersectoral Committee with a view to enhancing UNESCO's contributions to United Nations activities.

44. The proclamation of the United Nations Human Rights Education Decade would give new impetus to efforts in the area, and he congratulated in that context the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights for preparing the Plan of Action and for their excellent cooperation within the United Nations system. It was encouraging to see that UNESCO's contribution to human rights education was acknowledged in the Plan of Action and that close cooperation between the Centre for Human Rights and UNESCO was planned throughout the course of the Decade, from the initial stage of the formulation of strategies (in 1995) to the conclusion of the Decade (in 2005). Needless to say, UNESCO was equally ready to cooperate with the United Nations system as a whole and with the treaty bodies in particular, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, whose activities were greatly appreciated.

45. Mr. SWEPSTON (International Labour Organisation (ILO)) said that it hardly needed to be stressed how important the concept of human rights education had been for ILO ever since its inception in 1919. ILO's 75th anniversary had given the occasion to rethink its work and goals, and one concept that had emerged from discussions was the need for education to focus on human rights. ILO promoted the right to organize and bargain collectively

as the motor force for all other rights in its purview. It supported the objectives of the United Nations Human Rights Education Decade and attached great importance to furthering and teaching economic, social and cultural rights.

46. ILO's activities on human rights education could be broken down into two parts: teaching of human rights, instruction on ILO standards and procedures and vocational training itself; and discussions on human rights at national, international and local levels as an inherent part of ILO's goal of social justice. Recent educational activities had included a kit on labour standards and women's rights.

47. At its last session, ILO had decided to launch a campaign to promote the fundamental human rights conventions of that organization. It went without saying that economic, social and cultural rights were part and parcel of all those concerns.

48. ILO cooperated with other organizations on achieving the objectives of the Human Rights Education Decade. For example, it had cooperated with the Centre for Human Rights on seminars in Romania for the human rights training programme, held a joint meeting on indigenous peoples in Siberia (1993) and convened a meeting in Pakistan on the subject of freeing bonded child labour on the Indian sub-continent.

49. He had reservations, however, with regard to the implementation of such decades. ILO would have preferred more general cooperation rather than close coordination by one body in a highly structured programme, which was often counter-productive. Comprehensive collections of material and annual reporting were not always useful: close cooperation on practical aspects and individual activities within the general framework were, however, more productive. For its part, ILO worked together with the Centre for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and NGOs in the field.

50. Another problem involved adjusting closely negotiated programme and budget decisions to make any large changes in programmes and orientations. Cooperation could only take place within the programme and budget that had already been fixed. It was important to keep the objective in view to avoid generating a lot of paperwork with little substance. There were many activities that could and should be carried out together; ILO welcomed the general discussion, because it would be useful in achieving objectives.

51. Mr. OUANES (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that human rights education and dissemination would help prevent refugee flows, facilitate reception in countries of asylum and consolidate the durability of voluntary repatriation as a solution. While the immediate concern was to ensure that refugees were granted asylum and that their personal security was safeguarded, true protection was only possible when the refugees enjoyed economic, social and cultural rights. It was therefore important to guarantee that human rights standards, including the obligations set out in the Covenant, were also applicable to refugees. As early as 1951, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees had provided for a set of rights within the economic, social and cultural sphere, such as the right to

work, to housing and to education; States were encouraged not to make reservations on the articles relating to those rights, and some States had even been persuaded to withdraw reservations made.

52. UNHCR was contributing through its programmes to ensuring the economic, social and cultural rights of refugees, particularly for women and children. Aware of the central importance of refugee women in economic and social life and in the structure of the family, it was carrying out three programmes dealing with human rights education for women, in Nepal, Guatemala and Sri Lanka. It was providing special health care, primary education and vocational training and was conducting income-generating projects and literacy campaigns. Its assistance was aimed at educating refugees about their own rights.

53. UNHCR shared the view that education and public information initiatives were essential to promoting human rights and in that connection, the Office of the High Commissioner had developed important ongoing activities related to teaching refugee law and furthering an understanding of the basic principles of international protection. Its strategy was to integrate dissemination and training. It was also finalizing a training module on human rights and refugee protection. In recent years, cooperation and joint activities with NGOs, academic institutions and other United Nations bodies had allowed for the training of thousands of NGO staff and government officials from around the world. Cooperation with UNESCO had also been strengthened in that area. The Office of the High Commissioner was increasingly emphasizing a "train the trainers" approach with a view to maximizing scarce human resources and ensuring a multiplier effect for training activities. The assistance of fully trained UNHCR refugee-law training officers in Europe and North America was very valuable.

54. As part of its networking strategy, UNHCR was responding to increasing requests for the transfer of information to government refugee agencies, in particular in countries which had recently instituted refugee protection mechanisms. In February 1994 UNHCR and the Immigration Refugee Board of Canada had signed a memorandum of understanding on training government officials and exchanging information. Other Governments had released experienced staff to be trained as refugee officials or offered internships for such officials to gain knowledge of law procedures and criteria through direct contact with more developed administrative or judicial systems.

55. In order to centralize and maximize the effectiveness of refugee-law training activities, measures had been adopted to ensure a more systematic incorporation of those activities into the overall objective-setting and programming exercise undertaken in UNHCR field offices. The new system was gradually being put into place through the establishment of regional coordinators for refugee-law promotion, dissemination and training.

56. In addition to activities carried out on its initiative, UNHCR also endeavoured to step up its involvement in the training programmes of other organizations and with Governments. Examples were UNHCR's continuing cooperation with the International Institute for Humanitarian Law (San Remo), the Graduate Institute of International Studies (Geneva), the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights (San José) and several other institutions dedicated

to promoting and/or teaching international humanitarian law in its broadest sense. Within the United Nations system, UNHCR was intensifying its participation in the dissemination and training activities of the Centre for Human Rights, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Department of Peace-keeping Operations. Cooperation with the latter, which had begun in 1993, had resulted in a preliminary training package for peace-keeping contingents incorporating several segments of an international humanitarian undertaking, as well as in the context of their respective training programmes. UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross were also increasingly involved in joint activities.

57. Over the years, with active UNHCR support, several refugee-law courses and seminars had been organized by renowned law faculties, mainly in Western Europe and North America, and by regional lawyers' networks, such as the European Legal Network. UNHCR had entered into an arrangement with the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London to develop multidisciplinary curricula on refugee issues, including refugee law, to be made available to interested universities in English-speaking countries of Africa and Asia.

58. The UNHCR Centre for Documentation on Refugees provided an authoritative collection of refugee literature and legal information, which was available to all those interested.

59. UNHCR was convinced of the importance of public opinion in enhancing an awareness that refugees were often victims of human rights violations, preventing refugee flows and contributing to respect for human rights standards. UNHCR's public information action was rapidly growing and diversifying. In 1993, the Office had launched a public awareness campaign in more than 20 countries of asylum, designed to heighten awareness for refugee rights. Women and children were targeted for such activities, and educational materials, such as magazines and videos, had been developed. UNHCR had also prepared supplementary instructional materials and made them available to teachers. The public was being addressed in advertisements in the international media, and the campaign was being expanded with videos.

60. The growing diversity and complexity of humanitarian emergencies resulting from human rights violations meant that special attention needed to be given to education and public information on human rights. Such activities must be intensified and constantly adapted to emerging needs. UNHCR was committed to exploring, with the support of the international community, every opportunity for developing partnerships and networks in that endeavour.

61. Mr. HELMICH (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) said that one of the main tasks of OECD was to contribute to sound economic expansion in member and non-member countries in the process of economic development. OECD's contribution to human rights was a practical one: to foster sustainable economic and social development as one of the basic guarantees for the development of human rights. In the year ahead, the OECD Development Assistance Committee would organize its first meeting on the practical promotion of human rights in the developing countries as part of its bilateral donor programmes.

62. What was most lacking was practical information on what was actually being done in the framework of development policies. Even OECD members in the forefront of promoting human rights in the developing countries were rather uncoordinated in fostering a concerted effort for such promotion.

63. The OECD Development Centre had worked with UNHCR in 1993 to produce for the Vienna Conference on Human Rights a directory of over 600 non-governmental organizations in the OECD member countries working in the field of human rights, refugees, migrants and development. That directory was available free of charge to NGOs and Governments in developing countries and at print cost to all other interested Governments and organizations. Copies could be made available to interested members of the Committee and observers.

64. He agreed that extensive multilateral coordination of human rights issues was not what was needed, especially in respect of organizations that were perhaps not the main agents of human rights promotion. He had seen statistical evidence that the Centre for Human Rights, whose activities he greatly respected, was a rather small operator in human rights support, so to give the Centre a wide mandate in cooperation was perhaps not the most practical way of operating, especially since the Centre had just sent out, one year after the creation of the database jointly with UNHCR, a new questionnaire to set up a database with exactly the same format. That showed that even those in charge of creating coordination were not always very well coordinated internally, especially with other organizations of the United Nations family. He had written a letter on that matter to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, to which he was still awaiting a reply.

65. Many non-governmental organizations and national ministries worked effectively and it did not take millions of dollars to see where meeting grounds were. It did need a little investment to see who was doing what where, and that was how OECD would make its major contribution in the years to come.

66. Ms. CHAPMAN (American Association for the Advancement of Science) said that her Association welcomed the opportunity to bring to the attention of the Committee the importance of incorporating human rights into educational programmes and the activities of professional societies grouping scientists, physicians and health workers, engineers and other professions. The AAAS had nearly 300 affiliates and over 140,000 members. One of the major objectives of its Science and Human Rights Programme was to promote awareness of and commitment to human rights in the scientific community.

67. Human rights education mainly focused on the need to incorporate education about human rights and the dignity of the human person in the primary and secondary school curriculum, or for governmental and non-governmental institutions to undertake information programmes about the provisions of specific human rights instruments. Far less attention was generally accorded to the importance of including human rights in university, graduate and continuing education programmes in scientific and professional fields. Yet scientists and professionals could play an important role in promoting and protecting human rights, particularly many of the rights enumerated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

68. Moreover, many of the rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration and the major international human rights instruments were essential to the conduct of science. Scientific inquiry required the free flow of information and ideas between scientists regardless of national borders, political ideologies or the backgrounds of the scientists involved. Freedom of thought, expression, communication and movement were essential to the advancement of science. Several of the rights enumerated in the Covenant were also essential to scientists, including the right to education and training, the right to work and to choice of work, and the right of an author to benefit from the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from his scientific, literary or artistic production.

69. Scientists had an apparent predisposition to come into conflict with repressive Governments which engaged in human rights violations, perhaps reflecting the fact that their professional ethics inclined them to be objective and questioning. Trained to share their discoveries and views and to maintain a professional allegiance that was international rather than national in scope, scientists were also vulnerable because they were viewed as posing a threat to authoritarian regimes. The risks incurred by scientists as dissenters, were essentially the same whether the political system was of the right or the left. The 1994 Directory of Persecuted Scientists, Engineers and Health Professionals published by the AAAS documented 468 active cases of scientists suffering human rights abuses.

70. Because scientific knowledge might be used for destructive as well as constructive purposes, it was important that scientists should be familiar with human rights standards and guard against potential abuses of science that might result in human rights violations. The areas involving the misuse of science to carry out human rights abuses that were listed in the AAAS Directory included the misuse of psychiatric treatment for political purposes in China, the damming of rivers and estuaries by the Iraqi Government to cause the forced migration and death of thousands of Marsh Arabs, the alleged use of prohibited chemical weapons against the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey, and the enforced involvement of scientists in the infliction of torture and other forms of cruel and unusual physical punishment in Israel, Malaysia and Singapore. The abuse of psychiatry for political purposes was perhaps the best known example of the misuse of science. Human rights groups had documented the abuse of psychiatric procedures, techniques, knowledge and hospitals to detain compulsorily and "treat" individuals for their political, social or religious views rather than for genuine medical reasons in a number of countries, including the former Soviet Union, Chile, Argentina, China, Somalia, Romania and South Africa. The collusion of health professionals in torture and its concealment was an even more serious issue. Their involvement in the administration of the death penalty and their participation in the amputation of hands, feet and fingers as punishment, also contradicted the most fundamental precept of medical ethics - "above all, do no harm".

71. Scientific methods had important human rights applications. The AAAS Science and Human Rights Programme, recognizing that science could make a singular contribution to protect and promote human rights, had developed scientific methods for monitoring the implementation of human rights and promoting a greater understanding of and support for international human rights within the scientific community. The Programme had assisted human

rights groups and organizations by providing scientific expertise related to human rights in the forensic sciences, genetics, statistics, computers and information management, medicine, the prevention of torture and the treatment of torture survivors. The Programme had recently established a human rights consulting service to match requests for scientific assistance from the United States and overseas human rights groups with scientists interested in using their skills on behalf of human rights.

72. Those linkages had implications for human rights education. There was a need to incorporate special training about human rights in the education of scientists so that they could better understand the intimate connection between science and human rights. The solidarity of scientists and other professional groups in denouncing violations of the rights of colleagues had proved useful in obtaining the release of fellow scientists or an improvement in their situation. It was also important to sensitize scientists to relevant international human rights standards so that they would respect those principles when conducting their work. While the rapid evaluation of science created opportunities to improve human welfare, it also introduced practices that posed risks to the integrity and dignity of the individual. Human rights education as part of a professional curriculum could assist individuals in applying human rights principles to their research, clinical trials and daily work, and it could also motivate professional groups to apply their scientific expertise to human rights research and documentation.

73. Such training might involve a variety of strategies including incorporation into formal university and professional school curricula, continuing education courses, seminars and symposia, sensitization through curriculum and standards developed by professional and scientific societies. She could provide details of such strategies carried out by the AAAS to any interested persons.

74. The AAAS had found surprise among health professionals that there were international standards going beyond the ethical norms usually taught. It would therefore be useful if the Committee could encourage more systematic teaching by professional scientific groups about the norms of the Covenant, particularly in continuing education programmes. Such a recognition by the Committee would give groups like hers an organizing platform.

75. Ms. KOENIG (People's Decade for Human Rights Education) said that she was particularly happy to address the Committee at a time when the General Assembly was proclaiming a United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, a strategy which her organization had long advocated. One of the guiding principles of the draft plan of action for the Decade was education conceived to include the equal participation of women and men of all age groups. The draft plan of action also provided that human rights education efforts for the Decade should be shaped so as to be relevant to the daily lives of learners, engaging them in a dialogue about ways and means of transforming human rights from the expression of abstract norms to the reality of their social, economic and political conditions.

76. Her organization believed that human rights education was itself a human right. Human consciousness could be developed throughout the community through an ongoing dialogue, with every person becoming both teacher and student and with all joining in the discussion of how people could live with each other in the world in dignity, how women could participate in the decisions that determined their lives, how men and women could participate in their economic and social development as full partners and not as mere recipients, how the vicious cycle of humiliation could be broken, and that all were born equal in dignity.

77. Moreover, imposed ignorance was a violation of human rights that had to be eradicated. It was a moral imperative that people should learn the essence of the covenants, conventions and resolutions adopted for their survival in the course of the last 48 years. Through the process of dialogue about human rights as related to people's daily lives, a human rights culture would emerge in which human rights would be understood and accepted as the system of values guiding participation in society, social responsibility and economic, social and cultural contacts.

78. Her organization believed in popular mass education in human rights. At the Population Conference in Cairo it had organized a human rights education workshop for participants engaged in teaching family planning and reproductive rights, who were interested in integrating human rights education into their work. From the discussions a methodology had emerged according to which providers would focus on discussing with husbands and wives responsible participation in the decisions that determined their economic, social and cultural lives.

79. In addition, her organization would shortly hold a training of trainers meeting at which a pilot project would be designed to evaluate ways of including human rights education in family planning activities. Health care providers who regularly met large numbers of mothers and children would be useful in providing education in human rights.

80. Her organization proposed to hold a special meeting at the World Social Summit to plan a workshop for educators, development workers and international development agencies, as a result of which it was hoped that such agencies would make it mandatory to include human rights education in every development project.

81. Many people knew how to teach human rights, inform people about norms and standards, document human rights violations and tell the community about the protection available. What they did not know was how to start a process by which women and men of all ages viewed human rights as a resource that informed their survival, how to introduce human rights as the solution to conflict resolution in the future, how to change the attitudes of victimizers and bystanders, and how to make all people active agents of social change.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.